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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model for integrating the myriad services needed by behavior disordered students. In this model, the role of the behavior disorders service coordinator is orchestrating all services within the school and community to facilitate successful remediation of behavior problems and successful transition into family life, community life, and the workplace. A school-based person has been chosen as coordinator because the school is the only agency that sees the student daily. The service coordinator acts as a full time case manager who meets daily with each student and makes arrangements for all needed services. The coordinator also is responsible for ensuring that the student's individual educational program is consistent with his/her needs and for locating and arranging specific services from non-school agencies. In this latter role, the coordinator acts as advocate for the student and for the student's parents. The service coordinator may also assist older troubled students in their search for employment. Small schools might implement this model by having a person such as a resource teacher work half or quarter time in the coordinator role. Competencies and personal characteristics of the service coordinator are listed. (SV)

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The Behavior Disorders Service Coordinator: A Bottom-Up" Model to Providing Related Services

Introduction and Rationale

Schools have been slow in providing many kinds of related services to handicapped students. This has been particularly evident with those troubled students identified as behavior disordered. Kaufmann (1985) has noted that not only is this population underserved based on federal prevalence estimates, but that these prevalence estimates are very likely set at artifically low rates. Best conservative school-based estimates set the prevalence of students with serious and persistent behavior problems at 6-10% (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988). In addition to these figures, many other categorically identified handicapped students have secondary behavior problems. This represents a fairly large number of students, even in rural areas, who are in need of direct support services at some point in their school career.

Aside from the sheer numbers of students not receiving direct services, there are serious concerns being expressed among special educators about the low levels of related and transition services being provided formally or informally to troubled students (Johnson, Bruininks, & Thurlow, 1987; Rusch & Phelps, 1987; Stodden & Boone, 1987). Rusch and Menchetti have helped educators focus on new directions by stating (1988, p. 363),

> In little more than a decade, special educators have become advocates not only for the right of students with handicaps to educational services, but also for their right to lead productive and dignified lives as a result of attending our nation's public schools.

The BD Service Coordinator model is an outgrowth of this broadened interpretation of the school's role in the lives of students handicapped by behavior disorders. The program elements presented here are based on ecological theory. The model approaches behavior disorders from the view that all factors in the student's life impact his behavior, for good or ill. From this perspective, no program for troubled students could be complete or could address many of the contributing factors which help maintain

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the behavior disorder unless considerable attention is focused beyond academic/behavior programming. No attempt is made here to describe the total continuum of services to troubled students. Instead the program element most often missing, the availability of coordinated school, community and regional services, is presented.

Several basic assumptions undergird the development of this model. First, the ultimate goal of each handicapped student's education is eventual successful integration into the mainstream of both the school and the larger community. Second, the public school is the only agency that has daily contact with the troubled student. Third, few programs are in place which include specific plans for delivering related services for troubled students. And fourth, "top-down" models which rely on having formal interagency agreements between state and local agencies and school districts are extremely hard to negotiate and maintain.

Review of the Literature

The current need for expansion and changes in BD service provisions can be firmly documented (Benz & Halpern, 1987; Kauffman, 1985; Rusch & Phelps, 1987; Stodden & Boone, 1987). Expansion is needed in both quantity and quality of services. Aside from addressing the problems of only a fraction of the troubled students in our schools, two other areas of concern should be scrutinized: (1) the emphasis in existing programs in light of student needs and (2) the desirability of including ecologically based program components: related services.

What do programs for seriously emotionally disturbed students look like? This question has been addressed by a series of studies.

Grosenick, George & George (1988) have reviewed and documented the lack of availability of written program descriptions for seriously emotionally disturbed students. They identified the following program elements as necessary for comprehensive service planning: program philosophy, program goals, student needs and identification, instructional methods and curriculum, community involvement, program operation and design, exit criteria and evaluation.

The absence of this information has made the study of model programs in a naturalistic setting difficult. Their study expressed concern that only 3.5 percent of the school districts surveyed had programs that comprehensively described on paper the continuum of services available to behavior disordered students.

The use of teacher's time in implementing programs for students identified as behavior disordered have changed little since the beginning of the 1980's (Zabel, Peterson & Smith, 1988). In their replicated study of teachers' use of time in BD classrooms, Zabel's group (1988) found no significant differences between the use of time by resource room teachers and self-contained classroom teachers. In discussing the findings, they noted the total time spent in consultation and indirect services to BD students to be stable at 9-10% during the five years period regardless of service delivery model.

This finding is significant because it indicates that regardless of severity, for all students combined less than 1 hour a day is spent by teachers affecting modifications in the variables which have precipitated and/or maintained the behavior disorders. These variables include counseling students, conferring with other teachers, administrators, school counselors, mental health workers, parole officers, social workers, court workers, welfare case workers, minority agency personnel, parents, youth shelter personnel: all those who are in a position to affect change in the larger environment.

Lewis (1988) has summarized the impact of ecological variables in the successful treatment of disturbed students. His findings support the proposition that personal change and ecological changes are symbiotic and must occur simultaneously for treatment to be successful. While Lewis based his findings on students treated in residential facilities, the variables that intertwine in maintaining or changing behaviors are the same whether the student is in attendance in the public schools or in residential treatment. Lewis stresses two points (p.99),

> First, the amount of improvement made by a child in residential treatment does not determine the degree of successful adjustment he or she will experience upon returning to home and community. Second, ecological factors appear to be important in maintaining or suppressing gains made during residential treatment.

Given the severe needs of troubled students and the recommendations of such groups as The National Special Education and Mental Health Coalition (Forness, 1988), the indications are strong that little time is presently being devoted to orchestrating the program elements needed to provide an adequate program.

Overview of the BD Service Coordinator Model

The "bottom-up" service coordinator model will provide a format for integrating the myriad services needed by troubled students. This service coordinator serve as a

liason among the following personnel: regular education, special education, vocational education/rehabilitation, correctional and community agencies.

We believe these services can best be coordinated from within the school. In this model, the designated school personnel would have a significant amount of planned time to arrange for services. While it is appropriate to schedule some services on a long-term basis, troubled students have many immediate service needs. Only one who is in daily contact with the student can see that these needs are communicated and cared for in a timely fashion.

This model shares characteristics with existing school social worker and school counseling models. While social workers and school counselors provide services to students whose needs are transitory and short term (Millard, 1978), personnel in this model make their commmitment to those students whose problems are complex enough to require long term and/or intensive, integrated services. This model will include services to any student on the full continuum of service delivery models, including those who are in self-contained programs.

Rationale for the BD Service Coordinator Model

Existing services today are almost entirely limited to the provision of classes for academic remediation, sometimes with efforts made at vocational training. The related services mandated by P.L. 94-142 to insure the success of educational efforts have been largely ignored. While research addressing the availability of related services to students identified as behavior disordered is lacking, many have spoken out for the coordination of these services.

The usual plea has voiced the need for inter-agency cooperation. Programs have been implemented to work toward this goal. Nevertheless there is still a gap in the delivery of services (Peters, Templeman, Brostrom, 1987). What has been lacking is a person who has primary responsibility for that of coordination of services for troubled children and youth.

The Role of the BD Service Coordinator

The role of the BD Service Coordinator is to orchestrate all services s within the school and community that facilitate successful remediation of behavior problems and successful transition into family life, community life and the work place. This is accomplished by designating a single person to act as full time case manager, meeting daily with each student and making arrangements for all needed services.

As previously stated, a school based person has been chosen for the BD Service Coordinator because of all the agencies responsible for affecting behavior change in the troubled student, the school is the only one who sees the student on a daily basis. The importance of this factor cannot be stressed too strongly. With this group of students long-term goals and objectives must often be met via short term adjustments in service. Those who have worked with troubled students over time are very aware of the daily crises and need for attention to both short term and long term problems.

The Service Coordinator will serve in several roles requiring a wide range of competencies. One basic component of the job description is that this person be responsible for providing and/or coordinating direct education services to troubled youth within the public schools. This means that the Service Coordinator is responsible for making sure that for each student on his caseload, the individual educational program is consistent with each student's educational needs.

A second basic component of the job description requires the Service Coordinator to meet with each student on his caseload on a daily basis. The purpose of these daily contacts is to provide an ongoing, informal method of assessing the current needs of each student.

The third basic component of the job description requires this person to be responsible for locating and arranging for specific services from such varied agencies as: mental health, family planning, parole and court services, welfare, division of family services, financial planning services, regular, vocational and special education teachers within the school, actual and prospective employers, minority service agencies (e.g. Indian agency), youth groups and clubs, group and residential homes, the families of students, and family planning services. In this role, the Service Coordinator acts as an advocate for the student and/or parent(s). These students and/or parents often lack knowledge about the services needed, the availability of these needed services and the appropriate persons to contact to access these services.

This componenet of the job description is one of the most demanding time-wise. It will require the Service Coordinator to have advanced competencies in how to seek out the services and/or resources that are available. These competencies are especially important because the kind and amount of services available and the appropriate persons to contact will vary a great deal from locale to locale.

In the "bottom-up" model, informal low-cost and no-cost cooperative efforts can be the initial focus of service coordination. A valuable by-produce of this initial

implementation strategy would be the gradual and unforced growth of interagency cooperation efforts. Later when "top-down" agreements are forged (ideally at the state level), agencies would already have an experience base for working cooperatively with one another.

A fourth component of the role of the Service Coordinator is to assist older troubled students in their search for out-of-school employment. While a small percentage of special education secondary students are involved in work-study programs, the majority are entering the world of work on their own. Successful community living beyond the school years depends heavily on their employability. The Service Coordinator can be of invaluable help in securing and monitoring early employment.

Strategies for Developing and Implementing the Model

McCauley (1984) has noted that the success and life expectancy of new programs is much more related to the perceptions held by those with school and community power than by the actual efficacy of the program. Convincing the administration of the need for such a program is the first essential step in developing and implementing the model. Many administrators are unrealistic and naive about the needs faced by students with behavior problems. To emphasize this point, this author was recently informed in a letter from a Kansas secondary principal that:

> We hope the future of our problem students is not dependent on the continuation or expansion of our services for problem students. We are committed to the effective schools process and are learning how to meet the needs of all students within the regular classroom. We believe that all students can learn and this can be made possible by assuring that all our teachers practice the essential elements of instruction.

One of the important issues that must be presented to school administrators and to school board personnel who represent the larger community is the continuing presence of these troubled students in the community and school. The fact is that almost all pupils who have been removed from the schools for placement in residential or diagnostic facilities will return to the school. The typical length of absence from school for outside placement is 30 to 90 days. After that time, the youth typically returns to his home.

The position of Service Coordinator can be flexibly implemented. For larger school systems, one or several persons could hold full time positions. Smaller schools could have a person who works half or quarter time in this role. Resourse teachers could have a half or quarter day not scheduled in the classroom to do this coordinating of

services. The key is to have blocks of time, not instructional planning time, that are reserved solely for this purpose.

Training the BD Service Coordinator

Many new programs are implemented by inservice training, and this would be one feasible alternative for preparing future Service Coordinators. However, if the model becomes a part of the standard delivery service continuum, the needs of troubled students will be best served by a Service Coordinator trained in a preservice program with that intent in mind.

The demands put upon educators who deal daily with troubled students require training experience beyond that of the entry level teacher. For this reason, it is proposed that the BD Service Coordinator be trained in a master's level program. Because of the complexity of the Coordinator's job description, it is possible to come into the program with prerequisite skills from several undergraduate programs: social work, school counseling, certification in behavior disorders.

The training program will need some flexibility because of varying undergraduate program competencies. Realizing that all university training programs will differ according to state educational agency requirements and accreditation standards, it is simply proposed that competencies are required in the areas of social work, counseling and behavior disorders, with additional requirements for coursework in consultant training.

Regardless of the specific curriculum included in the preservice training program or the program offered though inservice training, the following competencies and qualities need to be cultivated in preparing the Service Coordinator.

Competencies

1. Knowledge and understanding of the school's and district's organizational structure.
2. Knowledge and understanding of the school's and district's cultural and economic diversity.
3. Knowledge of and ability to interpret local, state, and federal guidelines, policies and procedures.
4. An understanding of curriculum practices and needs specific to secondary school programs.
5. An understanding of the curriculum needs of special students and the abililty to know where a specific special student should be in relation to the existing curriculum of the school or district.
6. The ability to make appropriate curriculum modifications and individualize instruction to

meet the needs of special students.

7. Knowledge of behavior management techniques and the ability to help others utilize these techniques.
8. The ability to establish and maintain a good communication system with all school personnel, students, parents, and other professionals associated with the education process.
9. The ability to implement effective follow-up procedures and solicit early and continuous feedback during intervention.
10. The ability to instruct and inform other school personnel, via inservice, about the consultant's role and help that is available.
11. Experience in identifying, selecting and using appropriate resource agencies.
12. An ability to organize and maintain program and student records.
13. Knowledge of transition strategies from special education and corrective education to regular education and visa versa.
14. The ability to document consultant interactions and evaluate same.
15. The ability to effectively evaluate a student's academic and/or behavioral progress.

Qualities

1. A true advocate for troubled youth.
2. A positive attitude.
3. Assertive and self assured.
4. A good public relations person.
5. Tactful and understanding as well as appreciative of the expertise of other educational and related personnel.
6. Demonstrates initiative in responding quickly and adequately to student needs.
7. Respects confidentiality.
8. Resourceful.
9. A good liason between schools and outside resources and agencies.
10. Knows that being a professional involves being aware of current trends, issues, and effective practices in your field.
11. Maintains professional appearance, attitude, and manner.
12. Well organized yet flexible.

Conclusion

The BD Service Coordinator model offers a plan to fill the current void in services for students with behavior problems. The implementation of this model would go a long way in fulfilling the spirit of the law (P.L. 94-142) in enhancing the probablity of a successful school program for troubled children and youth.

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